

**Contemporary
Philippine Arts from
the Regions
Quarter 2 - Week 2
Local Materials Used in
Creating Art**



What is It

The choice of art materials is a vital part of the artist's approach to his or her work and it is important to pick the right kind of materials. As a new or budding student-artist, any artwork that you will be creating is considered as contemporary art provided that it is an original concept. It should be conceived by the artist him or her self. Call it reproduction or personal rendition, copying somebody else's work is short of making some kind of artistic plagiarism. It's duplicating an original artwork with or without insignificant changes.

In creating a unique and original contemporary artwork, many artists rely on the appropriate and adequate supply of art materials. Local art materials are locally available materials from the region, province, city or town. The availability and accessibility of local art materials make them convenient and easy to use in creating art. Local art materials in combination with the tools and equipment used to create art are referred to collectively as art media. For example, paint and brush, paint is the material, and brush is the tool, together they make art media.

Local and Indigenous Art Materials

It is important to distinguish the difference between indigenous art materials and local art materials. Anything indigenous naturally comes from the place or locality. It is not introduced to the place or imported from somewhere else. Whereas, anything local also comes from the place or locality but may or may not be originally part of that place or locality. It could have been introduced to the place or locality by colonists or settlers from other places.

Indigenous art materials are materials that are natural or inherent from the place or locality. It has been there right from the start. All indigenous art materials are local materials but not all local art materials are indigenous. **Local art materials** could be a mix of indigenous art materials and introduced art materials.

Kinds of Local Art Materials

The use of local art materials in creating various types of arts has become the showcase of Filipino creativity, resourcefulness, and artistry. The following are kinds of local materials that can be found in the different regions and provinces of the country:

1. **Abaca**, also called **manila hemp**, is extracted from the leaf sheath around the trunk of the abaca plant known scientifically as *Musa textilis*, which is related to the banana plant. Initially used as material for rope, the abaca found its way in

the arts. The plant can be found in plantations in the Bicol Region and in the different regions of Mindanao.

2. **Coconut Shells** or **bao**, are actually used for wood carving, improvised cooking utensils and myriads of other uses. Laminated coconut shells are considered as almost the same as the quality and appearance of turquoise shells or ivory. Coconut shells are bountiful anywhere in the country where coconut palm trees, scientifically known as *Cocos nucifera*, are planted. These shells are byproducts of coconut fruit processing.
3. **Bamboo** or **kawayan**, mistakenly identified as a tree, is actually a kind of grass. Classified scientifically as a plant of the subfamily *Bambusoideae* of the grass family *Poaceae*. It is found almost throughout the archipelago. The bamboo stem has plenty of uses and one of its prominent use is in creating art.
4. **Capiz** or **kapis** shells come from the **windowpane oyster**, a bivalve marine mollusk in the family of *Placunidae*. They are abundant in the Philippines, commonly found along the coastal waters. Cleaned and processed capiz shells are used for various artistic applications like windows, lanterns, and walling.
5. **Rattan** is a naturally renewable palm belonging to the subfamily *Calamoideae* of climbing palms. It is widely used as furniture, handicrafts, and building material. It is grown in plantations in Western Visayas and Mindanao.
6. Small or **Cowrie shells** or **sigay**, scientifically named *Cypraea chinensi*, measure about 2 centimeters each. They are often used in shell jewelry and shell craft work. They are popular for their vibrant color. They are found on sandy seafloor around the Philippine islands.
7. **Junk**, which are old or discarded articles, are considered useless or of little value but for the creative eyes of an artist they are essential in creating a well-known art form called junk art. The discarded materials stored or hidden away inside homes or thrown in garbage bins are usually made up of plastic, wood and metal.
8. **Dried leaves** falling off from branches of trees and plants are inexhaustible. Ranging from pale yellow to dark brown, dried leaves are plentiful throughout the year. Dried leaves art is already considered a craft of its own. Palm, *pandanus*, or sea grass leaves are used to create artistic mats or *banig*.
9. **Plant seeds** can be acquired from farms and rural areas. Others can be bought commercially like corn, sorghum, mung beans, sunflower and the like. Seed art can be found in certain localities. They are distinct for their creative and colorful designs.
10. **Rocks and sand** of various types are abundant. They vary in size and color, allowing for varied art forms.

Local art materials can be classified as **traditional** and **non-traditional**. **Traditional art materials** available locally are those that are usually bought from department stores and bookstores. They include crayons, oil pastel, watercolor, colored pencils and other usual materials used in school. **Non-traditional art materials** are materials that are not usually used in creating art like coffee, plastic bottles and recyclable materials that are similar to those used in junk art.